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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this paper is to describe the nature of the diverse and evolving forms of campus child care in the United States; the role they serve in support of the academic, service and research mission, their links with the community, and the challenges they face. (34 references) (BB)

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CAMPUS CHILD CARE:DIVERSE AND CHANGING

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The major purpose of this paper is to describe the nature of the diverse and evolving forms of campus child care in the United States: the role they serve in support of the academic, service and research mission: their links with the community ; and the challenges they face.

A campus child care center is a program on or affiliated with an institution of higher education that provides education and service to parents and young children for varying periods of time. These programs may differ in organization, operation, support systems, staffing patterns, education and service features. For example there may be all day schedules, flexible schedules, half day sessions, evening programs, weekend programs , or a combination of these. Programs may serve a variety of ages: infants,toddlers,preschoolers , school age, mixed ages, or a combination of all of the above. Eligibility may vary. Some centers serve only children of students, or various combinations of students. faculty , staff and community. The size of programs ranges from small centers of ten to twenty to larger centers that serve three hundred or more.

Brief historical review

Campus child care centers first appeared on campuses at the turn of the century. These early centers ,usually sponsored by an academic department, were generally half day or extended day models where all children came in and went home at the same time. The actual first campus center was a laboratory nursery school, developed by John Dewey in 1896 at the University of Chicago. In each succeeding decade centers were started on campuses, in response to particular issues of the times.(17)(18)

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In the early decades, child development research, parent education, and teacher training gave rise to many centers. During the thirties and forties universities and colleges expanded their own centers to provide training and professional guidance to employees of centers, set up during the depression and WWII , crisis times in the United States. Then cognitive research, the effects of poverty on large numbers of families, and the civil rights movement, spurred innovative , but mainly compensatory programs to aid poor children. In the sixties and seventies the women's movement, the changing family structure and the student movements also set the stage for an increase in

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centers. This time, rather than departments or responses to availability of funds , the impetus came from coalitions of women graduates, women faculty, undergraduate students who joined forces to promote child care services. It was in this period that the diverse forms began to evolve in increasing numbers . During the eighties there has been another upsurge of activity in campus child care. More centers are opening. There is interest in supporting child care for faculty and staff, a reemergence of student activity and union activity, research and evaluation studies at a national, state, system, and local level as well as specific campus studies and reports.(18)

Research activity

At present most of the research undertaken is descriptive, documenting the features of campus child care, services provided and academic connections. There has been a modest beginning to delineate the educational and service orentation of the campus programs. There have been, in addition, surveys of need and supply and evaluation of campus systems and state wide systems.(11)(12)(13)(14)(15)(18)

In summarizing a series of studies that sought to describe the features of child care on campuses it appears that most centers serve one hundred or fewer children, averaging about sixty one and a half children. They are licensed for between fifty and seventy five children, are generally open nine to ten hours per day, have primarily full or , half day programs, with drop in , evening, after school, weekend and satellite much less common. Programs serve primarily the three to six year old: toddlers are served less often, and infant and school age child care is minimal. Most directors of campus child care programs held a Masters Degree or a Ph.D. and the majority of teachers meet state licensing. Staff is also composed of work study students, field experiences students, cooperative education students, and foster grandparents. (11)(12)(13)(14)(15)

Several studies that looked at the amount of service provided, identified major gaps between supply and need on campuses. As I cite some figures keep in mind that each number represents a parent and child. One state study described the changing patterns in student parents. Nearly sixty percent of their community college students are over thirty, and have student, family and work responsibilities. Although 42 of the 63 state supported university branch campuses and community and technical colleges do offer some type of child care, of the 400,000 students attending, only 3000 children receive child care.(2) Another state campus system identified the level of need among students and employees within its university system. Students and employees have 62,695 children under twelve who need child care at present. They have only 1193 licensed slots.(30)

In addition to the need and supply studies the benefits of providing child care services have been studied in one formal study, and through interviews on campuses as part of evaluations of centers, and studies of systems The one formal study available focused on campus based child care services provided by a community college to student parents pursuing their education. There was conclusive evidence of a strong relationship between the existence of campus based child care and academic success of student parents. In this study academic success was defined as either completion of a degree or certificate program, transfer to another college or continued enrollment. According to the self report, eighty percent of the parents cited child care availability as important factor in their decision to enroll. Sixty percent said continued enrollment was a result of campus based care. Twenty six percent increased their course load the second semester. Supplemental benefits that were identified included helpful social interaction with peers, the role of the center staff advising, providing help in parenting problems, serving as home base, quality of child careand peace of mind.(7)(24)

There has been some documentation of what happens when child care is not available or reliable? At one university one third of continuing education students and almost twenty percent of the graduates had seriously considered dropping out of school because of child care problems. In another study students cited the frustration trying to balance work, school and family. There were major problems because of a lack of evening and weekend care, lack of infant care, lack of sick child care, and lack of affordable child care. Student parents suffered financial strain, guilt about not taking enough time with their children, as well as not doing well in their courses. Supervisors reported the negative affect on work performance as well including absenteeism, scheduling and job performance. In one year in that college system they lost a total of 36,920 days of work.(9)(30)

Use by Academic Departments

Several studies summarized how he centers are used by academic departments. One national study reported the following departments using centers for field work, observation, student teaching and research : psychology, nursing, educaiton, speech and communicative arts, early childhood, elementary education, social science, home eocnomics.(11) In one system alone, twenty one different disciplines used the centers including some of those already mentioned and such other areas as black studies, business,pediatric service,library science,theology,architecture, communications-.(24)

Some universities and colleges integrate their centers with the teacher education programs. For example, on one campus the child care programs , called the child study centers,comprised of a traditional half day nursery school, a flexible scheduled child cre center and a parent center were housed within the early childhood development department, and an integral part of our teacher eduation curriculum. The faculty were committed to relating theory and practice. Each course had field work that was generally fulfilled in one of the centers. This enabled students to participate in three programs having different schedules, serving different populations , each with their own needs. Students learned to relate to a consistent group of children in a half-day program, the children who come and go in the flexibly scheduled program, changing composition each semester, and to children and parents attending a program together.(16)

One community college, whose mission included both a lab for students majoring in child care or related curriculum and developmentally appropriate services for children three months through ten years in a variety of child care programs,built a new facilty to house both components. On this campus a kindergarten teacher recently won a Fullbright scholarship and the school will have an exchange teacher this year.That is certainly responsive the the academic aims of an instiution.(32)

Services provided

Diverse models have emerged to respond to the varying needs of their populations and seek innovative ways to support service, academic and research needs of the institution. I'm going to briefly describe seven to you.

One comprehensive program has the following components- center based, home based, an after school, parent education , information and referral, each added as the need arose.(5) Another campus is working with the community to build a public private partnership including a university, hospital, brokerage all of whom contribute different pieces.(21) Another program added, over time, infant, toddler, preschool, school age, and a hospital connection increasing their hours open to be from six a.m. to midnight. The university recently built this program a new building, a state of the art facility, with four pods, one for administration services, and three for infants, toddlers and preschool; each pod serving approximately 100 students grouped according to age, to preserve continuity in the family and ease of drop off and sibling visits.(10) Another university has a network of models serving children from six weeks to six years that includes a day care for infants and toddlers, a family day care model with eight day care homes, and a preschool and kindergarten , with a child study center providing consultation and financial support.(3)

One campus system has nine campuses, each has a unique program. On one campus staff even have priority. Another campus in the system has infants, toddlers, preschool, extended day care, satellite day care homes, coop nursery school, lab school, elementary school and infant program.(34) One campus developed a child care tuition assistance program, actual direct dollars to help defray high cost of quality care and a program of short term care for fixed hours to respond to emergency needs, short term needs, and disruptions in other child care plans.(27) Another college has developed a child care vendor program in which they purchase child care slots for students; use student funds to purchase quality child care; and provide training for providers.(8) And still another university started with a half day program, expanded to an hourly day care, added an evening program and summer program for children through sixth grade, and then a full day kindergarten model, with administrative and financial assistance split between the departments of elementary education and the department of home economics and family ecology.(1)

Leadership and Challenges That Face Campus Child Care Centers

One chancellor of a state university campus said " There are those who believe that universities can only reflect society...I believe that universities must be role models for society... We must have the courage to lead... our committment to equality of oportunity will be as firm as our committment to excellence." (28) Another on a different state campus said that colleges and universities should take a lead position on child care. It is a subject integrally connected with our three part mission of education , service and research. This is not a new idea Historically John Dewey said of a campus lab school (whichever design it follows)"that the campus lab school bears the same relation to the work of pedagogy that a laboratory bears to biology, physics, or dentistry. It has two main purposes to exhibit, test, verify, criticize theoretical statements and principles and to add to the sum of facts and principles in its special line." (25) For us early child care and education, and support for children and families are our special line. The programs on our campus represent a microcosm of what is happening in the communities and I and the national group I represent have a vision of what our programs should be doing that reflects the chancellors I've just cited. High quality early child care and education programs should exist on all campuses to support the teaching, the research and service mission of the institution and the surrounding communities. The centers should be a core of an effort to create new knowledge, alternatives, possibilities and options in conjunction with other departments, the community, the state and national groups to further our understanding of and the interest of all children and families. We.ve been issued a challenge to take a leadership role for the field at large and work toward integrating the traditions of child care and early

education for all children.(26) We have made a modest beginning in supporting research, academic and service needs on campus, linking with the community but we must continue to act. We have a responsibility and an exceptional opportunity in our role on a college campus that we can no longer afford to ignore if we are to improve the care and education of young children and families in our countries.

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About the Author

Carol R. Keyes is an Associate Professor of Early Childhood at Pace University, New York City, United States. She is the past chairperson of the National Coalition for Campus Child Care Inc., an educational and professional membership organization of directors, programs, administrators, teachers and students, faculty and staff, in higher education, that started informally in the activist seventies in the United States and became a formal organization in the eighties to help campuses design programs that support a vision described in the paper.

Her interest in the topic developed as a result of several experiences. She is a woman who reentered the educational world when child care was not available on university campuses; she had to find sitters for her three children or modify her program. She has been an early childhood administrator trying to provide developmentally appropriate child care and early education; and she is an early childhood professor with a point of view about how child care centers should look to meet the needs of children and families.